

Berkeley Fire Department Wild Land Fire Season

Each year, thousands of acres of wild land and hundreds of homes are destroyed by wild fires. To help protect our families and property, there are certain precautionary steps we should all follow.



Thin the vegetation around your house

All vegetation is fuel for a wildfire, although some trees and shrubs are more flammable than others. The greater the distance between your home and the vegetation, the more protection you have.

Create a 30' safety zone around your house

- Minimize the volume of vegetation in this 30' safety zone. If you live on a hill, extend the zone on the downhill side. Fire spreads rapidly uphill. The steeper the slope, the more open space you'll need to protect your home.
- Remove vines from the walls of your home.
- Move shrubs and other landscaping away from the sides of the house.
- Prune branches and shrubs within 10' of chimneys and stove pipes.

- Trim tree branches so that leaves or needles are at least 8' from the ground.
- Thin a 10' space between tree crowns.
- Replace highly flammable vegetation such as pine, eucalyptus, juniper and fir trees with lower growing, less flammable species.
- Replace vegetation that has branches from the ground-level up (these act as ladder fuels for the approaching fire).
- Cut your grass regularly.
- Clear the area of leaves, brush, pinecones, dead limbs and fallen trees.

Clear all combustibles within 30' of any structure

- Ask PG&E to clear branches from power lines.
- Avoid using bark and wood chip mulch.
- Stack firewood 100' feet away and uphill from any structure.
- Keep your gas grill and propane tank at least 15' from any structure. Clear an area 15' around the grill. Avoid using your grill during high fire risk times.

Remove debris from under sun decks and porches

Any porch, balcony or overhang with exposed space underneath is fuel for a fire. Overhangs ignite easily by flying embers and by the heat and fire that get trapped underneath. Clear away leaves, trash and other combustible materials from underneath sun decks and porches. Enclose wooden stilts with non-combustible material such as concrete, brick, rock, stucco or metal. Use non-combustible patio furniture and covers.

Cover house vents with wire mesh

Any vent or other opening can allow embers and flaming debris to enter a home and ignite it. Cover all openings with ¼" or smaller corrosion-resistant wire mesh

Install spark arrestors in chimneys and stovepipes

Chimneys create hazards when embers escape through the top. To prevent this, install spark arrestors on all chimneys, stovepipes, and vents for fuel-burning heaters. Use spark arrestors made of 12-gauge welded or woven wire mesh screen with ½" openings.

Use fire resistant materials for your roof and siding

Your roof is especially vulnerable in a wildfire. Embers and flaming debris can travel great distances, land on your roof and start a new fire. Avoid flammable roofing materials such as wood, shake and shingle. Materials that are more fire resistant include fiberglass shingles, slate, metal, clay and concrete tile.

Use fire resistant materials in the siding of your home, such as stucco, metal, brick, cement shingles, concrete and rock. You can treat wood siding with UL-approved fire retardant chemicals, but the treatment and protection are not permanent.

Choose safety glass for windows and sliding glass doors

Windows allow radiated heat to pass through and ignite combustible materials inside. The larger the pane of glass, the more vulnerable it is to fire. Dual- or triple-pane thermal glass, and fire resistant shutters or drapes, help reduce the wildfire risk. You can also install non-combustible awnings to shield

windows, and use shatter-resistant glazing.

What do you do if a wildfire threatens your home?

- If you are warned that a wildfire is threatening your area, listen to KCBS (740AM), KGO (810AM), and Berkeley's WNZV (1610AM) radio for reports and evacuation information. Follow the instructions of local officials. Remember, personal safety always comes first.
- Back your car into the garage or park it in an open space facing the direction of escape. Close the car doors and windows. Leave the key in the ignition. Close garage windows and doors, but leave them unlocked. Disconnect your automatic garage door opener.
- **Call 911 to report all wildfires.** Let the fire department get to them when they're small.

